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WHY STUDENTS SELECT AGRICULTURE AS A MAJOR COURSE OF STUDY.

BY- JOHNSON, CECIL H. MACK, KINSLER B.
CLEMSON UNIV., S.C., DEPT. OF AGRICULTURAL EDUC.

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DESCRIPTORS- *AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES, VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE, *ENROLLMENT INFLUENCES, BACKGROUND, *COLLEGE STUDENTS, SURVEYS, QUESTIONNAIRES,

BECAUSE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE ENROLLMENTS WERE NOT KEEPING PACE WITH THE DEMANDS FOR AGRICULTURAL GRADUATES, A STUDY WAS UNDERTAKEN TO DETERMINE FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE ENROLLMENT AT CLEMSON UNIVERSITY AND REASONS FOR THE HIGH PERCENTAGE OF MAJOR COURSE CHANGES. A FOUR-SECTION SCHEDULE, ADMINISTERED IN CLASSES TO 159 SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE JUNIORS AND SENIORS, DETERMINED (1) FARMING BACKGROUND, (2) FACTORS INFLUENCING CHOICE OF MAJOR FIELD, (3) PRESENT MAJOR, TIME OF DECISION, AND PROGRAM CHANGES, AND (4) FACTORS INFLUENCING MAJOR FIELD CHANGES. STUDENTS WITH VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE AND FARM BACKGROUNDS (45 PERCENT) WERE INFLUENCED MOST BY VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA (FFA) MEMBERSHIP. STUDENTS WITH ONLY A VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE BACKGROUND (8 PERCENT) WERE INFLUENCED MOST BY FFA MEMBERSHIP, VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS, PRESTIGE OF THE VOCATION, PARENTS, AND FARMERS. STUDENTS WITH ONLY A FARM BACKGROUND (18 PERCENT) WERE INFLUENCED MOST BY PARENTS, FRIENDS IN THE MAJOR, AND PROFESSIONALS IN AGRICULTURE. STUDENTS WITHOUT VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE BACKGROUNDS (29 PERCENT) WERE INFLUENCED MOST BY PROFESSIONALS IN AGRICULTURE, PARENTS, AND FRIENDS IN THE MAJOR. HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS HAD LITTLE INFLUENCE ON ANY OF THE GROUPS. A MAJORITY OF THE STUDENTS MADE THE CHOICE TO ENROLL IN AGRICULTURE WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL. THOSE CHANGING THEIR MAJORS WHILE IN COLLEGE (46 PERCENT) INDICATED THAT LACK OF INTEREST IN THEIR PREVIOUS MAJOR, FRIENDS ENROLLED IN THEIR PRESENT MAJOR, AND MEMBERS OF THEIR CHOSEN PROFESSION WERE MOST INFLUENTIAL IN THE CHANGE. (JM)

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Cecil H. Johnson
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Department of Agricultural Education

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A Term Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

As of March, 1963 there were 3.3 million persons enrolled in college in the United States. Of this number, only 6 percent were farm youth.[1] Thus it is apparent that the percentage of farm youth attending college is not keeping pace with the population growth. This situation is causing considerable concern to professional agricultural leaders. In the United States at the present time there are about 15,000 agricultural jobs available each year and only approximately 7,000 agricultural graduates to meet this need. College agricultural departments invest large sums of money annually in order to promote agriculture and to influence prospective college enrollees in choosing careers in this field.

This study was undertaken in an attempt to determine some of the factors that influence the selection of the course of study by students enrolled in the School of Agriculture at Clemson College. An attempt was also made to determine why such a high percentage of students change their major course of study while attending college.

Significance of the Problem

The intent of this research was to reveal some of the factors that influence the selection of the major course of study by students enrolled in the School of Agriculture at Clemson College. This information would be a valuable asset to high school vocational guidance counselors, vocational agricultural teachers and college faculty advisors in aiding students in choosing their recruiting and informational programs.

Assumptions and Limitations

In making this study the authors have assumed that Juniors and Seniors are more capable of identifying the factors that influenced their choice of major course of study than are Freshmen and Sophomores. The authors also assumed that any changes in major field of study would have been made, in most cases, prior to the Junior year in college. Therefore this study has been limited to Juniors and Seniors enrolled in the School of Agriculture at Clemson College during the 1962-63 semester.

Definitions

Juniors. To be classified as a Junior, a student must have completed at least 68 semester credit hours and must have a grade-point ratio of 1.6 or above of a possible 4.0.

Seniors. To be classified as a Senior, the student must have completed sufficient scholastic work toward his degree to enable him to complete the requirements for graduation by completing not more than 42 additional semester credits. The student must also have a grade-point ratio of 1.7 of a possible 4.0.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the previous literature reveals several studies relating in one way or the other to the present study. Powell and Bloom[6] investigated the development of the vocational plans of adolescents, to determine the objectivity of their choices, to discover the motivational forces operating within vocational outlook, and to locate any pattern of problems that are present in this area of adjustment. Freeh[5] conducted a study to investigate who is enrolling in agricultural colleges, and why they are enrolling in agricultural curricula.

Bently and Hemp[3] undertook a study to discover why students in colleges of agriculture at Purdue University and the University of Illinois chose agriculture as a career, and to determine whether there were significant differences among various groups of students with respect to the factors which influenced them to choose agriculture as a career.

The data for this study were obtained from Freshmen and Senior agriculture college students who responded to twenty selected factors as having influenced them "a great deal," "little" or "not at all" in their choice of agriculture as a career. This study showed that factors influencing the most students in their choice of agriculture as a career were "interest in out-of-doors," "interest in farm life," "experience in farming," "work with livestock," "work with farm crops," "work with farm machinery" and "seemed to drift naturally into agricultural work." Next in importance in terms of numbers of students influenced were the factors "agriculture seemed to offer greater opportunities for employment," "acquaintance with agricultural leaders," "was impressed by fine livestock

and crops at fairs," "agriculture seemed to offer greater opportunities for financial reward than other fields," "4-H Club experience," and "studying agriculture in high school."

Less than half of most groups were influenced by such factors as "judging team experience," "studying vocations in high school," "visiting an agricultural college," "FFA Chapter experience," "never had any real impulse to do anything else," "prizes won at agricultural fairs" and "expect to inherit a farm someday."

A follow-up study was conducted by Bently and Hemp[4] at Purdue University and the University of Illinois. This study also included Freshman and Senior agriculture majors attending the two Universities. This study was designed to determine the factors which influence agricultural college majors in choosing their fields of specialization and to determine whether there were significant differences between various groups of students with respect to the factors which influenced them in choosing their fields of specialization.

The study showed that the persons influencing the most students in their choice of major field of study were fathers, mothers, friends, and teachers of agriculture. Next in importance in terms of numbers of students influenced were relatives, county agents, college professors, high school principals, and teachers other than agricultural. Less than one-third of the students indicated that they were influenced by college and high school guidance counselors and superintendents of schools.

The vocational factors which influenced the most students were "economic advantages of the occupation," "opportunity for employment," "employment before entering college," and "social advantages of the job."

Approximately three-fourths of the students indicated that they were influenced by reading agricultural books or magazines, while less than one-half were influenced by "college catalogs, announcements, and hobbys."

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Source of Data

The source of data was a schedule type inquiry form which is an inquiry form filled out in the presence of the questioner. This form was prepared under the supervision of Dr. A. K. Jensen and was used with the approval of Dr. J. W. Jones, Director of Agricultural Teaching.

This approach was used because it provided an opportunity to explain the purpose of the study and to explain the meaning of items that were not clear to the students involved. The availability of the respondents, the economy of time, and expense were also reasons why the schedule type inquiry form was used.

Methods of Obtaining Data

One or both of the authors contacted the various professors teaching Juniors and Seniors and requested permission to administer the inquiry form to each class. With the professor's approval, the inquiry form was explained to the class and each student was requested to respond by completing the form.

The data were then tabulated and reported descriptively.

Description of the Inquiry Form

The inquiry form was divided into four sections. Section one was designed to determine the farming background of each student.

Section two was designed to determine some of the factors and the degree of influence each exerted on the choice of major field of study.

Section three was designed to determine the student's present major, when he decided on agriculture as his major field of study, and if

any changes had been made in his choice of major field of study while attending Clemson College.

Section four applied to students that had changed their major field of study. It was designed to determine some of the factors and the degree of influence each exerted on the student's decision to change his major field of study.

In order to facilitate the analysis of these data, the authors decided that if an individual respondent answered yes to four or more of the seven questions in Section I of the inquiry form (appendix) he would be classified as having a farm background.

Following a preliminary examination of the completed inquiry forms, the decision was made to separate the respondents into four distinct groups. Group one included those students who were enrolled in vocational agriculture in high school and also had a farm background. Group two was composed of those students who were enrolled in vocational agriculture in high school but did not have a farm background. Group three included those students who possessed a farm background but were not enrolled in vocational agriculture. Group four was made up of those students who were not enrolled in vocational agriculture and did not have a farm background.

Table I shows the number and the percentage of the students falling into each group.

It can be seen that 45 percent of the students completing the inquiry form were enrolled in vocational agriculture in high school and also had a farm background. On the other hand only 8 percent of the respondents had no farm background but were enrolled in vocational agriculture in high school. It is also interesting to note that 29 percent of the respondents had neither a farm background nor had they been enrolled in vocational agriculture in high school.

The information presented in Table II is an analysis of factors influencing those respondents having had both a vocational agriculture

and a farm background in selecting their major field of study. It is of interest to note that parents exerted much influence on 35 percent of the responding students in this group. Vocational agriculture teachers exerted much influence on 42 percent and F.F.A. membership exerted much influence on 31 percent of the students in this group.

On the other hand, 82 percent of the students indicated that high school counselors exerted no influence on their choice of major field of study. Career publications exerted no influence on 54 percent, and expected income exerted little or no influence on 96 percent of the students in this group.

An analysis of factors influencing those respondents having had vocational agriculture in their selection of a major field of study is shown in Table III. As is shown, F.F.A. membership exerted much influence on 42 percent of the students in this group in their choice of a major field of study. Vocational agriculture teachers and the prestige of the vocation exerted much influence on 33 percent of the students in this group. High school counselors exerted no influence on 92 percent of the

TABLE I

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF THE RESPONDENTS BY GROUPS

	Number	Percent
I Students taking vocational agriculture and having farm backgrounds	71	45
II Students having vocational agriculture	12	8
III Students with farm background only	29	18
IV Students with no farm background of vocational agriculture	47	29
Total	159	100%

respondents of this group. College campus visits and college faculty members exerted no influence on 84 percent of the students in this group in their choice of a major field of study.

Table IV presents an analysis of some of the factors influencing those respondents with no high school vocational agriculture but with a farm background in their selection of major course of study. Forty-one percent of these students were influenced much by parents, 27 percent by friends enrolled in the selected major, and 21 percent by outstanding farmers in the community. High school counselors exerted no influence on 69 percent of the students and career publications exerted no influence on 59 percent of the respondents in this group.

The information presented in Table V is an analysis of some of the factors influencing those respondents with neither a farm or vocational agriculture background in their selection of a major field of study. These data indicated that 34 percent of the respondents were influenced much by members of their chosen profession, while 15 percent were influenced much by friends enrolled in their major. This table also indicated that high school counselors exerted no influence on 77 percent of the students in this group, and college faculty members exerted no influence on 71 percent of these students.

In determining at what time students decide on a course of study in the School of Agriculture the respondents were again divided into the same four groups.

TABLE II

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF SOME OF THE PERSONS AND FACTORS INFLUENCING THOSE RESPONDENTS HAVING BOTH A FARM BACKGROUND AND VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE IN HIGH SCHOOL IN SELECTING THEIR MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY

Items	Influence Much	Little	No
Parents	35	50	15
Other members of family	18	24	58
Vocational agriculture teacher	42	37	21
Other teachers	8	6	86
F.F.A membership	31	45	24
County agent	11	21	68
County 4-H extension agent	21	13	66
Local 4-H leaders	15	20	65
4-H membership	21	23	56
High school counselors	3	15	82
College faculty members	13	31	56
Members of chosen profession	25	29	46
Outstanding farmers in your community	11	41	48
Friends enrolled in your major	15	42	42
College campus visits	8	36	56
Career publications	8	38	54
Expected income	4	52	44
Prestige of vocation	15	56	29
Available funds or schoarships, etc.	3	17	80
Other	13	--	87

TABLE III

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF SOME OF THE PERSONS AND FACTORS INFLUENCING THOSE RESPONDENTS HAVING VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE IN HIGH SCHOOL BUT WITH NO FARM BACKGROUND IN SELECTING THEIR MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY

Item	Influence		
	Much	Little	No
Parents	25	58	17
Other members of family	8	50	42
Vocational agriculture teachers	33	33	33
Other teachers	17	8	75
F.F.A. membership	42	42	17
County agent	8	17	75
County 4-H extension agent	--	8	92
Local 4-H membership	--	8	92
High school counselors	--	8	92
College faculty member	8	8	84
Members of chosen profession	17	42	42
Outstanding farmers in your community	25	17	58
Friends enrolled in your major	17	42	42
College campus visits	8	8	84
Career publications	8	33	58
Expected income	8	33	58
Prestige of vocation	33	42	25
Available funds or scholarships, etc.	8	17	75
Other	33	--	67
4-H membership	8	17	75

TABLE IV

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF SOME OF THE PERSONS AND FACTORS INFLUENCING THOSE RESPONDENTS WITH A FARM BACKGROUND BUT NOT HAVING VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE IN HIGH SCHOOL IN SELECTING THEIR MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY

Item	Influence		
	Much	Little	No
Parents	41	45	14
Other members of family	14	34	52
Vocational agriculture teacher	--	14	86
Other teachers	10	17	73
F.F.A. membership	--	--	100
County agents	14	17	69
County 4-H extension agent	10	24	66
Local 4-H leaders	3	31	66
4-H membership	14	24	62
High school counselors	--	31	69
College faculty member	10	14	76
Members of chosen profession	21	31	48
Outstanding farmers in your community	21	27	52
Friends enrolled in your major	27	17	56
College campus visits	3	17	80
Career publications	--	41	59
Expected income	10	31	59
Prestige of vocation	14	41	45
Available funds or scholarships, etc.	7	10	83
Other	34	7	59

TABLE V

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF SOME OF THE PERSONS AND FACTORS INFLUENCING THOSE RESPONDENTS WITH NO FARM BACKGROUND AND HAVING HAD NO VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE IN HIGH SCHOOL IN SELECTING THEIR MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY

Item	Influence		
	Much	Little	No
Parents	20	40	40
Other members of family	6	36	58
Vocational agriculture teacher	--	6	94
Other teachers	4	9	87
F.F.A. membership	--	2	98
County agent	--	4	96
County 4-H extension agent	--	2	98
Local 4-H leaders	2	4	94
4-H membership	2	6	92
High school counselors	6	17	77
College faculty member	6	23	71
Members of chosen profession	34	17	49
Outstanding farmers in your community	4	11	85
Friends enrolled in your major	15	11	74
College campus visits	2	17	81
Career publications	11	25	64
Expected income	6	40	54
Prestige of vocation	13	32	55
Available funds or scholarships, etc.	2	--	98
Other	40	--	60

TABLE VI

TIME OF DECISION AND PERCENTAGES OF DECISIONS MADE IN EACH TIME PERIOD ACCORDING TO RESPONDING GROUPS

Group		Grammar School	High School	College
I	Students taking vocational agriculture in high school and having a farm background	6	65	29
II	Students taking vocational agriculture in high school with no farm background	-	42	58
III	Students with farm background only	3	59	38
IV	Students with no farm background or vocational agriculture	-	42	58

TABLE VII

THE NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS BY GROUPS WHO HAVE CHANGED MAJORS WHILE ATTENDING CLEMSON COLLEGE

Groups		Number of Students	Number Changing	Percent Changing
I	Students taking vocational agriculture in high school and having a farm background	71	31	44
II	Students taking vocational agriculture in high school and having no farm background	12	6	50
III	Students with farm background only	29	13	45
IV	Students with no farm background or vocational agriculture	47	23	49
	Total	159	73	46

TABLE VIII

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF SOME OF THE PERSONS AND FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DECISION OF STUDENTS TO CHANGE THEIR MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY

Item	Influence		
	Much	Little	No
Parents	18	25	57
Friends enrolled in your present major	33	34	33
Member of chosen profession	23	28	49
College faculty member	22	28	50
Desire to specialize	21	30	49
Job opportunities	22	42	36
Prestige of profession	17	42	41
Expected income	11	44	45
Lack of interest in previous major	58	19	23
Personality conflicts with major professors	4	12	84
Inability to pass previous major	11	29	61
Career publications	5	19	76
Scholarships or other available financial assistance	--	14	86
Other	26	1	73

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken in an attempt to determine some of the factors that influenced the selection of the major course of study by students enrolled in the School of Agriculture at Clemson College. An attempt was also made to determine why such a high percentage of students change their major course of study while attending college.

A schedule type inquiry form was utilized to obtain the data. One or more of the authors administered the inquiry form to each class consisting of Junior and Senior students.

Prior to tabulation these data were categorized into four groups. Group I consisted of those students that had vocational agriculture in high school and had a farm background. Group II consisted of those students with vocational agriculture only. Group III consisted of those students with farm backgrounds only and Group IV consisted of those students with no vocational agriculture or farm background.

Upon analysis these data indicated that the student having had both vocational agriculture and a farm background were influenced most by vocational agriculture teachers, parents, and F.F.A. membership. The students in this group were influenced the least by high school counselors, expected income and available funds or scholarships, etc.

Students with no farm background but with vocational agricultural training were influenced most by F.F.A. membership, vocational agriculture teachers, prestige of vocation, parents, and outstanding farmers in their community. The students in this group were influenced least by high school counselors, local 4-H leaders, and county 4-H extension leaders.

Students with a farm background and no vocational agricultural training were influenced most by parents, friends enrolled in their major, outstanding farmers in home community, and members of respondents chosen profession. They were least influenced by high school counselors, vocational agriculture teachers, F.F.A. membership, and career publications.

Students with no farm background and no vocational agricultural training were influenced most by members of their chosen profession, parents, and friends enrolled in their major. They were least influenced by vocational agriculture teachers, F.F.A. membership, county agents, county 4-H extension agents and local 4-H leaders.

These data indicated that a majority of the respondents made the decision to enroll in the School of Agriculture during high school regardless of their background. The minority made the decision after one or more years of college.

These data indicated that the lack of interest in their previous major, friends enrolled in their present major, and members of their chosen profession had the most influence on those students who changed their major field of study. Career publications, personality conflicts with major professors, and scholarships or other available financial assistance had the least influence on those students who changed majors.

The authors suggest that further studies be made to determine why high school counselors and career publications had such little effect on a student's decision to enroll in the School of Agriculture. The authors also suggest further study to determine why, in the School of Agriculture, 46 percent of the students change majors at least once while in college.

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APPENDIX

This questionnaire is being circulated by members of Agricultural Education 504 as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the course. Its purpose is to determine what factors influence Juniors and Seniors enrolled in the School of Agriculture at Clemson College in the selection of their major field of study.

SECTION I

Answer each of the seven questions below <u>either</u> yes or no.

1.____ Have you lived on a farm for 3 or more of the last 8 years?

2.____ Have you worked on a farm for 3 or more of the last 8 years?

3.____ Are your parents or guardians presently living on a farm?

4.____ Have you managed or owned a farm for 3 or more of the last 8 years?

5.____ Were you enrolled in Vocational Agriculture in High School?

If so, how many years?____

6.____ Have you had <u>any</u> farm experience? How many years?____

7.____ Have you had any farm related experience, such as nursery work, work in feed and seed stores, etc.?

SECTION II

Read the following list of items and rate each according to the influence it exerted on the selection of your major field of study.

<u>EXAMPLE</u>:

Assume that your parents exerted much influence on your selection of major, career publications had no influence and a member of the college faculty had little influence.

The questionnaire would be completed in the following manner.

Item	Influence		
	Much	Little	No
Parent	X		
Career publications			X
College faculty		X	

Follow the same procedure in completing this section of the questionnaire.

Rate each of the following items as to its influence on the selection of your major course of study by checking the appropriate space.

Item	Influence		
	Much	Little	No
Parents	___	___	___
Other members of family	___	___	___
Vocational Agriculture Teacher	___	___	___
Other teacher _____ (specify)	___	___	___
F.F.A membership	___	___	___
County Agent	___	___	___
County 4-H extension agent	___	___	___
Local 4-H leaders	___	___	___
4-H membership	___	___	___
High School counselors	___	___	___
College faculty member	___	___	___
Members of chosen profession	___	___	___
Outstanding farmers in your community	___	___	___
Friends enrolled in your major	___	___	___
College campus visits	___	___	___
Career publications	___	___	___
Expected income	___	___	___
Prestige of vocation	___	___	___
Available funds or scholarships, etc.	___	___	___
Other _____ (specify)	___	___	___

SECTION III

Answer the four following questions.

1. What is your present major? _____

2. When did you decide on agriculture as your major course of study?

Grammar School _____
(specify year)

Junior High _____
(specify year)

Senior High _____
(specify year)

College _____
(specify year)

3. If you have changed majors while attending Clemson, what was your previous major(s)? _____

4. Circle year(s) in which change(s) was made; 1 2 3 4

Do Not proceed any further if you have not changed majors.

SECTION IV

Rate each of the following items as to the influence it exerted on your decision to change your major course of study.

Item	Influence		
	Much	Little	No
Parents	____	____	____
Friends enrolled in your present major	____	____	____
Member of chosen profession	____	____	____
College faculty member	____	____	____
Desire to specialize	____	____	____
Job opportunities	____	____	____
Prestige of profession	____	____	____
Expected income	____	____	____
Lack of interest in previous major	____	____	____
Personality conflicts with major professors	____	____	____
Inability to pass previous major	____	____	____
Career publications	____	____	____
Scholarships or other available financial assistance	____	____	____
Other _____ (specify)	____	____	____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION